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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001839

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: RCD: SOME STILL SEARCHING FOR REASONS TO ABANDON
THE TRANSITION

REF: KINSHASA 1311

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Bizima Karaha, one of the RCD-G's most well-known extremists, told Ambassador September 23 that the transition has failed, implying that another mechanism should be found. Ambassador reiterated strongly our message that the transition, while flawed, remains the sole available vehicle through which peace can be maintained and the Congolese people's interests advanced. Karaha also repeated the oft-heard RCD demand that Congolese military elements deployed in the Kivus must be withdrawn and the government cease supporting the Interahamwe. Ambassador also raised the importance of ending the climate of impunity which has partly enabled the cycle of violence plaguing the DRC. End Summary.

An Extremist Flexing His Muscles

2. (C) As recently as late-May of this year, Bizima Karaha was on the outs with RCD-G president Azarias Ruberwa, and indeed, had retreated, together with seven like-minded party colleagues, to a sort of exile in Goma. (Note: Karaha and the "group of seven" had disregarded Ruberwa's instructions on key votes, had publicly misspoken themselves in the Parliament, and as a consequence, Ruberwa had sent a letter to National Assembly President Kamitatu removing the eight from their RCD-appointed seats, a decision which prompted their disgruntled move east (ref). End Note.) In the wake of the Gatumba massacre, however, Karaha and others have recast themselves as among Ruberwa's close advisors -- although other party members have characterized Bizima more as a thorn in Ruberwa's side, or even as his "Rwandan jailor." In any event, his star within the party seems on the rise, and many of his previously disregarded statements have emerged as policy demands underpinning the RCD's return to the transitional government. During his September 23 meeting with Ambassador (a meeting which Karaha requested), he struck some familiar chords, including:

-- the RCD is afraid that the transition will end with many promises unmet; it is seriously behind schedule and little is being done to put things right; these current negative trends have serious implications for the future;

-- there has been no progress on military integration, which is key to progress on improving social services, installing democracy and holding elections; worse, there is no interest by the Congolese participants in making progress on these issues;

-- President Kabila doesn't act like a national leader, but instead tolerates hate media and makes promises that aren't kept;

-- therefore, given all the hidden agendas, the lack of Congolese ownership of the processes and general bad faith, the transition has failed.

3. (C) Karaha went on to reiterate another well-known RCD complaint, namely that the current deployment of government and MLC troops to the East is promoting uncontrolled fighting, exacerbating general instability, prohibiting the return of refugees, and generally making more difficult any move toward "real" military integration, since the current brassage ("mixing") of troop elements as seen in the East is forced and unnatural, and will lead different elements to turn on each other. He concluded by accusing the government of continuing to support the Interahamwe, and indeed of having integrated some elements into the military, including in the personal bodyguard of South Kivu regional military commander Mabe.

Transition Flawed, But Necessary

4. (C) In response, the Ambassador noted that no one had expected the transition to function perfectly; it is an ungainly conglomeration but the only means by which the ex-combatants can be brought to work together. Undeniably, progress has been slower than we and the international community had hoped, and much remains to be done. Flawed though it is, however, the transition remains the best and only means by which to reach the shared goal of free, fair and democratic elections, and to protect and advance the rights and interests of all the Congolese people. We must

all work with what we have available, and that is the transition. Military integration and the related issues of demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants are complicated issues in which the international community perhaps could usefully play a better coordinated role. Nonetheless, in this area there also is positive movement, seen in meetings of the Supreme Military Council and renewed activity by the international community. The Ambassador reminded Karaha that the mere existence of the CIAT (the International Committee to Accompany the Transition) is an unprecedented example of international interest in, and coordination with, the DRC.

15. (C) The Ambassador said that another complicated but important priority is addressing the climate of impunity which has enabled the cycle of violence plaguing the Congo. While the GDRC's request to the ICC may be a part of the answer, there are other avenues as well to address allegations that date back a number of years. The Ambassador went on to note that, as for the problem of the Interahamwe presence, the actions of (RCD) renegade commander Nkunda and the presence of his troops have essentially stymied very promising voluntary repatriation of Interahamwe elements facilitated by Monuc which, pre-Nkunda, had successfully moved over 14,000 FDLR and their families back to Rwanda. Post-Nkunda, the number of voluntary repatriations has fallen to practically zero. He concluded by noting that clearly it is in the interest of both the DRC and its neighbors, particularly Rwanda, to put an end to the menace of the Interahamwe, and to support disarmament and relocation programs.

Comment

16. (C) On the way out of the building, out of earshot of others, Karaha noted to the Ambassador that he had applied for a visa but had been told he needed to wait for some time before receiving an answer (note: e.g., a security advisory opinion). He asked if there is a problem. The Ambassador replied that he did not track individual visa cases, but underscored that in all cases, procedures standardized at all U.S. Embassies needed to be followed.

17. (C) Karaha may, in part, have come to hear for himself the U.S. reaction to his "the transition is dead" line. Or he may simply have been fishing to see if his failure to obtain a visa immediately signaled bigger problems with the U.S. Alternatively, Ruberwa may have encouraged Karaha to hear for himself that the U.S. doesn't accept that the transition is dead, in hopes that he will modify his stance. The latter, however, would be a vain hope, since by all accounts Karaha is the embodiment of RCD-G hard-core positions, and widely perceived to be a close Kigali ally. Karaha's comments, however, make painfully clear how very little maneuvering room Ruberwa has, particularly since, having chosen to retreat to Goma in the wake of Gatumba, he has made himself more susceptible, at least in the short-term, to Karaha's and other hard-line factional influences.

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